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Search the Scriptures

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

John 5:39

The unbelieving Jews sought to kill Jesus because He had healed a lame man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath.

Jesus responded by pointing out that He was only doing the work of His Father. This made the Jews more determined than ever to kill Jesus. Not only had He, in their estimation, profaned the Sabbath, but He had also claimed equality with God.

So Jesus spoke of the witness that the Father had made concerning Him that verifies who He is and what He claimed for Himself. There was the witness of John the Baptist. There was the witness of the works the Father enabled Him to do. There was the verbal witness of the Father from heaven during Jesus' ministry. Most im-

portant, there was the witness of Scripture.

In connection with the witness of Scripture, Jesus charged the unbelieving Jews, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

This admonition to search the Scriptures is applicable not only to the unbelieving element in the church (and to the world), but also to the believer.

Sad to say, Scripture searching is on the wane.

The Object of This Search

We are called to search the Scriptures.

The Scriptures are the infallibly inspired written Word of God. The Scriptures were written by various men of God over a period of some 1,600 years, beginning with Moses and concluding with the apostle John. These men were so led by the Holy Spirit that what they wrote was the very word of God. This is the testimony of the Scriptures themselves. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God (lit., God-breathed), and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for cor-

rection, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16). Because the Scriptures are inspired by God, they are also infallible, i.e., without error.

The Scriptures are of two parts—the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Scriptures to which Jesus referred in His instruction to the Jews were the Old Testament Scriptures. These were the product of His work as the eternal Son of God. The New Testament Scriptures would be written by His direction after His death and resurrection.

These Scriptures in their entirety (Old Testament and New Testament) testify of Jesus and the life eternal that is to be found in Him. Notice how Jesus joined these two together here: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

To understand the testimony of Scripture, we go back to eternity. God has eternally chosen to Himself a people with whom it is His good pleasure to live forever. The life that He has ordained for His people is an intimate life of friendship and fellowship that will not only delight Him but also

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fill them with the greatest joy possible. This life is an everlasting life, beginning in this life and continuing on into eternity.

It is God's wisdom to provide this purpose through Jesus Christ. That His people may enjoy life in this highest degree, God determined the fall into sin of the human race through our first father, Adam, and then the salvation of His elect church in Jesus Christ, His Son. He determined to accomplish this great salvation through the incarnation, the atoning death, resurrection, exaltation into heaven, and final return of His Son.

All this God has revealed in the Scriptures.

The main theme of all Scripture is Jesus Christ and the eternal life that is to be found by faith in His death and resurrection.

In fact, all that we need to know to attain this life in Jesus Christ is revealed in Scripture. We are told of the basis for that life—the atoning work of Christ. We are told of the power of that life—the resurrection of Christ. We are told how to lay hold of that life—faith in Jesus Christ. We are told how to live this life in every part of our earthly life. And we are given hope of this life in heavenly glory.

Small wonder that we read in II Timothy 3:16 that all Scripture is profitable. There is no book more profitable than this!

The Meaning of That Search

These Scriptures we are to search.

The word that Jesus uses here was a word that described miners who searched for precious metals, looking anxiously and intently for the bed of ore that was to them of greatest value. It speaks therefore of a diligent, faithful, anxious search for something of greatest importance.

In like manner we are to search the Scriptures. To search the Scriptures means that we

study them diligently and intently with a view to understanding the precious testimony they bring of life eternal in Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures certainly are worthy of our search. They are the only revelation of God concerning the life eternal that is in Jesus Christ. What is more important than this? We search the sports page, the financials, the comics, and various text books in college. The testimony of Scripture far exceeds any and all of these for importance and value! Yes, by all means, search the Scriptures.

This search is to be a daily, ongoing search that lasts a lifetime. This is not something we do with any other book. After a time of study we master its message and move on to some other author. But the Scriptures are of divine origin. They are an infinite deep that can profitably be searched out for an entire lifetime and not be exhausted.

This calling comes especially to us as believers.

Jesus called the Jews of His day to search the Scriptures because of their unbelief. Jesus pointed out that the Jews thought that in the Scriptures they had eternal life. The Old Testament Scriptures gave Israel the promise of eternal life with God. They were the seed of Abraham, with whom God had established His covenant. In that covenant God promised them the eternal life of His friendship and fellowship. So the Jews concluded correctly that in these Scriptures they had life.

However, the Jews of Jesus' day approached the Scriptures in unbelief. They did not see in the Scriptures Jesus, the Mediator, as the One in whom eternal life was to be had as a free gift. They rather read the Scriptures to mean that eternal life was theirs by reason of their being the natural children of Abraham. As the children of Abraham they would receive the prize of eternal life in

the way of their own obedience to the law.

This sad error on their part was not because the Scriptures were unclear. It was because of their unbelief that rejected the clear revelation of Scripture.

And so Jesus commanded them to search the Scriptures to find its testimony concerning Himself. Implied was the calling to submit to its clear testimony and believe.

This call comes to all that in unbelief reject the testimony of the Scriptures concerning Jesus Christ and the life God graciously provides in Him.

The call to search the Scriptures comes not just to those walking in unbelief but also to us believers. It comes especially to us believers. As believers we receive as truth the testimony of Scripture concerning Jesus Christ as the only way to eternal life. We also lay hold of Jesus as the Savior, and in Jesus Christ we come to enjoy life with God.

As believers we also must search the Scriptures. We must search the Scriptures so that we grow in grace and knowledge (II Pet. 3:18). We must ever be growing in our knowledge of the wonderful truth of salvation. We must also search the Scriptures so that we can evaluate the many ideas circulating in the world to discern what is true and what is false. This is where the Bereans excelled. In Acts 17:11 we read that the Jews of Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica. This was because they received the word that Paul brought concerning Jesus with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether Paul's message was true.

Searching the Scriptures is the very nature of one's faith. True faith leads one to search the Scriptures. It leads him to search the Scriptures in the privacy of his home by himself and with his family. It also leads him to

search the Scriptures in the fellowship of the saints with other believers in the church.

Yes, especially to us believers comes the call to search the Scriptures.

The Result of This Search

The result of such searching will be that we have eternal life.

Eternal life is not just reserved for the believer in heaven. It is a life that begins now. The key to having and enjoying this life is faith. By faith we lay hold

of Christ to receive the blessings of life.

Searching the Scriptures is an integral part of this faith. Faith does not lay hold of Christ apart from Scripture. Faith lays hold of Christ and the life that is in Christ by searching the Scriptures. Faith also lays hold of Christ by prayer. But it begins with searching the Scriptures.

And the heart of searching the Scriptures is attending to the sound preaching of Scripture. By the preaching we are instructed

in the Scriptures. By the preaching we are empowered and led to search the Scriptures in our home and in the communion of the saints.

Let us give diligence to the call to search the Scriptures.

Those who neglect the Scriptures will find they have at best a tenuous hold on Christ and the life that is in Him.

Searching the Scriptures we have the fullness of Jesus Christ and the life that is in Him—now and forever. 

The Road to Rome Is Paved... (2)

In this second article (and in a third to follow, D.V.) we intend to underscore that the movement amongst Protestants to renew ecclesiastical unity with Rome (represented by the current ECT movement) is a flow that has been all towards Rome and Rome's doctrines—even to the point of acknowledging Rome's primacy in ecclesiastical matters. Rome has not conceded one essential thing to its "erring, separated brethren."

As we pointed out in the last issue, one of the main catalysts in mainline Protestantism's move towards reunion with Rome was Billy Graham. This is not to say that reunion with Rome was what Graham promoted early on, but this is how making common cause with modernistic, liberal church leaders worked itself out in time, and in surprisingly short order at that.

In the late 50s and early 60s Graham's crusades began inviting known liberal, Bible-denying church leaders to promote Graham's crusades in their area and share the podium with him. In England these leading liberals had at first refused, due to what they perceived as Graham's narrow, fundamentalist biblical views. But when they witnessed the overwhelming numerical response of members of their own churches to Billy's crusades they had a 'change of heart.' They decided that, rather than to disparage Graham and his message, it might make better sense to be on stage with him and retain the goodwill (and membership) of their people by promoting his crusades. As Murray relates in his book *Evangelicalism Divided*, this was the Archbishop of Canterbury's rationale for changing his assessment of Graham and consenting to give the benediction at one of Graham's concluding rallies in London in 1954 (cf. p. 34). Any number of other leading liberals underwent the same 'change of heart.'

However, this 'change of heart' was qualified by one non-negotiable condition—they as liberals would make common cause with Graham, despite his "outdated fundamentalism," as long as he did not require them to renounce their basic doctrinal position, namely, their modern skepticism of all things biblical. Graham was only too happy to oblige. So a 'new way' for a working relationship between 'disagreeing' Christians was forged.

And this became the model for the ecumenical developments that followed.

Observing what goodwill resulted from Graham's change of policy from exclusivism to inclusivism (which is to say, from excluding those modernist church leaders who denied Scripture's infallibility and supreme authority to his including them in his campaigns), other evangelical churchmen decided that this might just be the way to save and to promote Christianity in a modern age so increasingly hostile to all things Christian.

Previous article in this series: October 15, 2008, p. 26.

Nowhere would this new spirit of cooperation, as well as toleration of the most serious of errors, evidence itself more clearly than in the evangelical wing of the Anglican Church, a denomination filled with spiritual dry rot, its leading Bishops far down the road of apostasy, its members ignorant of the most basic biblical doctrines.

The question before the evangelical segment was this: how could they have greater influence within their own dying denomination, revitalize a biblical faith amongst its members, and make Christianity a force to be reckoned with on the British Isles again?

Their answer was given at the first National Evangelical Anglican Congress (NEAC 1), which met in the spring of 1967 (referred to ever since as the "Keele Congress" because it was held on the campus of the Keele University). This gathering proved to be a watershed event for the ecumenical movement in Great Britain. In a move that was at least as astonishing to the liberal, modernistic leadership within Anglicanism as it was to conservative observers outside the denomination, lead figures of the Alliance of Evangelicals decided, in the interests of promoting a more robust Christianity, that it was necessary to practice a new 'openness' towards those whom they once referred to as heretics and teachers of false doctrines, namely, the liberal churchmen within their denomination. The Congress (attended by 519 clergy and several hundred laymen) assembled to articulate and popularize this new policy. In the words of one trying to calm the fears of those disturbed by the new direction, it was to be "Cooperation without compromise" (Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, p. 71).

Ah, the high-sounding slogans of the politically adept. It sounds so reassuring. But what if

the cooperation itself, due to the heretical character of one of the parties involved, is already fundamentally compromise? It was self-delusion from the outset.

To what extent the evangelicals were committed to this policy of folly is indicated by their inviting none other than the Archbishop of Canterbury to open the Congress and give the keynote address.

This was no little step. This Archbishop, Dr. M. Ramsey, was the same man who

...in the mid-fifties had criticized English evangelicalism as 'heretical' and 'sectarian', who expected to meet atheists in heaven, who took a liberal position on Scripture and a sympathetic view of reunion with Rome (Murray, *D. M. Lloyd-Jones*, vol. II, p. 539).

Significantly, the chairman of this Congress, and one of its main organizers, was none other than Dr. John Stott; and one of its main participants, as well as leading defenders against the criticism that followed, was Dr. J.I. Packer—two names that have played vital roles in the ECT developments of the last decade.

Further, it ought to be noted that the hierarchy of their Anglican Church was already making contact with Rome. In 1964, while the Second Vatican Council was still in session, two Anglican Bishops were sent to visit his Holiness, Paul VI. The words Pope Paul VI used to greet them were telling: "You have always been awaited and expected."

Note well, this is not the language of one who is interested in or intending to meet 'separated brethren' halfway. This is Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV at Canossa (A.D. 1077) all over again, minus the snow.

And as Murray reports,

Two years later [a year before 1967 and Keele!] Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, made a

more official visit [to the Vatican], and left wearing the Pope's episcopal ring with its emeralds and diamonds [Recall the reference to "One Ring to rule them" in our first article!] (*Evangelicalism Divided*, p. 79).

Of all of this the evangelicals who gathered at Keele were not ignorant. Knowingly they had cast their lot with men who were making overtures to Rome.

As Murray further points out,

Ramsey was already on record as supporting the opinion that the Pope 'has a primacy among all the bishops of Christendom; so that without communion with him, there is no prospect of a reunited Christendom.' In 1968 'Ramsey said he was very willing to recognize the Pope as chief of a united Church' (*Ibid.*, p. 80—Murray quotes from Chadwick and his book *Ramsey*, p. 325).

With such influential, Rome-infatuated churchmen the evangelical segment of the Anglican Church determined to make common cause. They were heading downstream to Rome, whether they were honest enough to admit it to themselves or not.

It is the swiftness with which the evangelicals became active in promoting reunion with Rome that startles. In but ten years' time, in 1977, at the second NEA Congress (which met at Nottingham), all pretence of the evangelicals' intention to keep their distance from Rome was jettisoned. In an astounding about-face, the evangelicals, who but ten years previous had dismissed as unfounded all fears of compromise, affirmed (in what is known as the *Nottingham Statement*):

Seeing ourselves and Roman Catholics as fellow Christians, we repent of attitudes that have seemed to deny it... (emphasis ours, kk). We shall all work towards full communion between our two

churches. We believe that the visible unity of all professing Christians should be our goal (Ibid., p. 216).

Note who is doing the repenting. Not Rome!

It is significant that the highlighted phrase was inserted following a complaint by a Roman Catholic observer who pointed out that the original statement contained "no mention of repentance by Anglicans for past misunderstanding of Roman Catholicism" (J. Capon, *Evangelicals Tomorrow*, p. 91).

And so the words were inserted. This, mind you, by the ecclesiastical descendants of men and women who were dismembered by Rome for their biblical and Calvinistic faith. The extent to which the ecumenically-minded evangelicals of the Anglican Church were willing to go to placate Rome simply astounds.

This willingness to capitulate to Rome was underscored at the time of the appointment of a new Archbishop of Canterbury in 1980, Bishop Robert Runcie, who replaced one Donald Coggan. Murray writes:

It is remarkable that before Robert Runcie was appointed to follow Coggan [as Archbishop] in 1980 the appointment was discussed with Cardinal Basil Hume (the Roman Catholic leader in Britain). Hume assured Donald Wright, the Archbishop's Patron-

age Secretary who visited him, that the Pope (John Paul II since 1978) "was particularly interested in the Church of England and the Anglican Communion". Wright noted that the Cardinal believed that he would "want to give reunion a big shove.... so what [Hume] is hoping for in the new Archbishop of Canterbury is a man who will give reunion an equally large shove". Runcie, as a liberal Anglo-Catholic, was well able to do that. "Of course I wouldn't have any difficulty in being a Roman Catholic," he told a friend. His enthronement in Canterbury Cathedral was marked by the presence of several Cardinals in the choir near him, the full use of Catholic vestments, a hymn in praise of Mary and Cardinal Hume reading a lesson. Billy Graham was among "specially invited" guests and gave a "warm greeting" to the new archbishop.

Two years later Runcie welcomed the Pope himself to Canterbury Cathedral (Ibid., p. 218—Murray's quotes are from the book *Robert Runcie: Reluctant Archbishop*, by H. Carpenter).

To all of these very telling shenanigans, as well as profanity of worship, the evangelical leaders raised no voice of criticism. Their silence was deafening. In the name of ecumenical progress, nothing was said to rebuke the Anglican hierarchy for its presumptuous behavior, lest it adversely affect the developing relations with Rome.

How does one explain this willingness by knowledgeable men (such as Stott and Packer) not only to suffer such things but also to justify such doings and then add their considerable weight to seeking closer ecumenical relations with Rome?

In large measure it is due to these men being under a grand delusion. Early on, these intelligent men convinced themselves that if only Protestants, in a show of goodwill, would make certain concessions to Rome, the 'new Rome' would reciprocate and make certain concessions to Protestantism and its historic distinctives in return.

To say that this has not materialized could well be the ecclesiastical understatement of the century.

One is reminded, for all the world, of the naïveté of Neville Chamberlain and his proposed policy of appeasement to Hitler in the late 1930s. With such a one you can broker a peace alright—as long as you make all the concessions.

Rome, for all her willingness to receive, make public appearances with, and even to produce jointly-worded documents with her "estranged brethren," has made it clear she has no intention of ever conceding one Roman position.

This we will continue demonstrating in our next article, D.V.



Letters

Correction

I am a PCA minister and a regular reader of *the Standard Bearer*. In the "All Around Us" column in the September 1, 2008 issue, you correctly state that the 2008 PCA General Assembly considered several overtures asking to create a study committee to

study the issue of the propriety of having female deacons. However, you go on to state that "the minority report [of the overtures committee] was adopted and a study committee was appointed to look at these issues." That is not correct. In fact, the majority report of the overtures committee

was adopted by a considerable margin; thus, no study committee was formed and the PCA continues its practice of limiting the office of deacon to men only. Interestingly, this was correctly reported in the August issue of the *SB* by Rev. Jason Kortering.

I thank you and the other men

in the PRC for your work. I continue to read *the Standard Bearer* with much profit.

Pastor Rob Hill,
St. Paul Presbyterian Church,
Jackson, MS

Response:

Dear Pastor Hill,

I see my mistake and feel very bad about it. It's what I feared would happen someday in writing for this column, that I would

misrepresent our Christian brethren.

Thanks for your kind words about the *Standard Bearer*.

Greetings in Christ,
— Rev. Rodney Kleyn 

Special Article

Rev. Angus Stewart

Rome and Politics (2)

The Declaration on Religious Freedom (1965)

According to Pope Paul VI (1963-1978), the *Declaration on Religious Freedom*, produced at Roman Catholicism's Vatican II (1962-1965), is "one of the major texts of the Council."¹ American Jesuit John Courtney Murray goes further: "the document is a significant event in the history of the Church" (p. 673).² Of all the 16 documents of Vatican II, the *Declaration on Religious Freedom* is the one that most clearly evinces the spirit of "updating" (Italian: *aggiornamento*)—Rome's "opening its windows" to modernity.³

The very first line of the

¹ Quoted in Walter M. Abbot (gen. ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (The America Press, 1966), p. 674. Henceforward, pages in parentheses refer to this book.

² By "Church," Roman Catholic authors mean the Roman Catholic Church; by "Catholic," they mean Roman Catholic.

³ The Roman Catholic Church in America in general and John Courtney Murray in particular were the staunchest advocates of liberalizing Rome's political theory.

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Previous article in this series: October 15, 2008, p. 40.

Declaration on Religious Freedom indicates that Vatican II was well aware of, and seeking to respond to, the modern political climate: "A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man" (p. 675). Chapter 1 begins with a ringing affirmation that has all the hallmarks of an echo from the United Nations: "This Vatican Synod declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom" (p. 678). This decree came over 400 years too late to save English Bible translator William Tyndale from burning at the stake at the behest of the Roman Catholic Church. So much for his "right to religious freedom."

Rome's *Declaration on Religious Freedom* requires the civil magistrate to act justly and without partiality on account of religion: "government is to see to it that the equality of citizens before the law, which is itself an element of the common welfare, is never violated for religious reasons whether openly or covertly" (p. 685). A Roman Catholic editorial footnote at this point observes, "This statement about equality before the law has an accent of newness in official Catholic statements" (p. 685, n. 18; italics mine). John Courtney Murray states,

A long-standing ambiguity has finally been cleared up. The Church does not deal with the secular order in terms of a double standard—freedom for the Church when Catholics are in a minority, privilege for the Church and intolerance for others when Catholics are a majority (p. 673).

What Murray euphemistically calls an "ambiguity" is actually Rome's historic theory and practice—she pleads for equality in a state in which she is in a minority, but claims supremacy in a state in which she is in a majority. Murray's adjective "long-standing" is more accurate. Just ask the French Huguenots.

Later, the *Declaration on Religious Freedom* declares,

It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's response to God in faith must be free. Therefore no one is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will. This doctrine is contained in the Word of God and it was constantly proclaimed by the Fathers of the Church (p. 689).

What utter disingenuousness! First, free or unforced faith is declared to be Roman Catholic teaching, even a "major tenet," while no indication is given of this being a 180-degree turn. In fact, given Rome's claim that

she is unchangeable, the unwary might think that this was always her position. Second, what about the Protestant martyrs who were tortured in an attempt to make them recant and confess Roman dogma! What about the pagans in central and eastern Europe in the Dark Ages who were forced to submit to baptism at the edge of a sword!¹ Third, in support of free or unforced faith, Rome (rightly) appeals to the Bible and the (early) Fathers. But the real issue is Rome's theology and practice from the Middle Ages onwards, until modern, humanistic states no longer permitted her coercing of "heretics" and pagans.

The *Declaration on Religious Freedom* becomes even more duplicitous:

The Church...recognizes, and gives support to, the principle of religious freedom.... Throughout the ages, the Church has kept safe and handed on the doctrine received from the Master and from the apostles. In the life of the People of God as it has made its pilgrim way through the vicissitudes of human history, there have at times appeared ways of acting which were less in accord with the spirit of the gospel and even opposed to it. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the Church that no one is to be coerced into faith has always stood firm (pp. 692-693).

An unsuspecting reader might think from this that the Roman Church "has always stood firm" on "the principle of religious freedom" and that "throughout the ages" this doctrine has been "kept safe," "handed on," "recognized," and "supported" by her! The part of the quotation above that suggests some contrition ("there have at times appeared

¹ In Vatican II's *Declaration of the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (1965), the church of the Inquisition now declares that she "repudiates all persecutions against any man" (p. 666).

ways of acting which were less in accord with the spirit of the gospel and even opposed to it") requires closer examination. First, no examples or specifics are given as to the denial of religious freedom, never mind any indication of the horror of Rome's terrible persecution of the people of God. Second, such things were apparently not frequent ("at times"). Third, the possibility of an excuse is raised, because the saints were passing "through the vicissitudes of human history." Fourth, whatever wrong was done was performed by "the People of God" (i.e., members of the Roman Church) but not by the Church of Rome herself—Rome's standard way of merely *appearing* to confess sins while still maintaining her claim to infallibility.

The "Development" of Roman Catholic Political Doctrine

John Courtney Murray's remarks on the development of Rome's political doctrine in her *Declaration on Religious Freedom* bear quoting at some length:

It was, of course, the most controversial document of the whole Council, largely because it raised with sharp emphasis the issue that lay continually below the surface of all the conciliar debates—the issue of the development of doctrine. The notion of development, not the notion of religious freedom, was the real sticking-point for many of those who opposed the Declaration even to the end. The course of the development between the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) and [the *Declaration on Religious Freedom*] (1965) still remains to be explained by theologians. But the Council formally sanctioned the validity of the development itself; and this was a doctrinal event of high importance for theological thought in many other areas (p. 673).

We should note, first, that Vatican II and all its sixteen

documents were designed to promote *aggiornamento* or "updating" in the Roman Church. Second, because Rome's historic political theory was the aspect of its theology most out of step with the modern, democratic, liberal world, and therefore in greatest need of "updating," the *Declaration on Religious Freedom* "was, of course, the most controversial document of the whole Council" (p. 673; italics mine). Murray states, "The debate was full and free and vigorous, if at times confused and emotional" (p. 672). Third, the controversy was not so much whether people should have religious freedom (though there were differences as to the model of religious freedom), but how this could be reconciled with earlier Roman Catholic teaching and practice. Fourth, the council decided that the idea of the development of doctrine was the best way of accounting for the changes. The *Declaration on Religious Freedom* "intends to develop the doctrine of recent Popes" on religious freedom (p. 677), but it wisely does not mention here the (contradictory) teaching of earlier popes or the traditional Roman Catholic position. Fifth, the problem is that no one can explain how the "new things" of Vatican II "are in harmony with the things that are old" (p. 676), that is, how Rome's opposition to democracy, the separation of church and state, religious freedom, etc., turned (or "developed") into endorsing what look like their opposites! As Murray delightfully understates it, "The course of the development between the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) and [the *Declaration on Religious Freedom*] (1965) still remains to be explained by theologians" (p. 673; italics mine)! They certainly have their work cut out for them:

Here are a few of Pius IX's own words stating in a positive way some of the principles of [his

Syllabus of Errors]: 15. No man is free to embrace and profess that religion which he believes to be true, guided by the light of reason... 23. The Roman Pontiffs and Ecumenical Councils have never exceeded the limits of their power, or usurped the rights of Princes, much less committed errors in defining matters of faith and morals. 24. The [Roman] Church has the power of employing force and of exercising direct and indirect temporal power. 34. The doctrine which equalled the Roman Pontiff to an absolute Prince, acting in the universal [Roman] Church is not a doctrine which merely prevailed in the Middle Ages. 54. Kings and Princes are not only not exempt from jurisdiction of the [Roman] Church, but are subordinate to the Church in litigated questions of jurisdiction. 55. The [Roman] Church ought to be in union with the State, and the State with the [Roman] Church... 77. It is necessary even in the present day that

the [Roman] Catholic religion shall be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship. 80. The Roman Pontiff cannot and ought not reconcile himself to, or agree with, progress, Liberalism, and Modern Civilization.¹

Also one has to ask, What fellowship or communion or concord or agreement is there between the political theory of Vatican II's *Declaration on Religious Freedom* (1965) and that of Boniface VIII's *Unam Sanctam* (1302)? One of Boniface's "two swords" (the temporal one) appears to have been sheathed. The triple tiara, in which he marked an important development, seems to have been laid aside. Boniface's "biblical exegesis" and arguments

¹ John W. Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church* (USA: The Trinity Foundation, 1999), pp. 143-144.

have been "updated," such that they are now almost stood on their head.

All these changes, and yet Rome boasts that she is unchangeable (*semper eadem*)! All this "updating" (or "reforms"), yet Rome is, by her own definition, irreformable! How, despite all these contradictions in her political doctrine—as well as in other areas of dogma—Rome still maintains that she is infallible, it would take a canon lawyer to work out!

Yet all this does not spell the end of Rome's political influence and desires. Much more remains to be said on this score. Machiavelli, that most wily of Italian political theorists, is the *de facto* patron saint of that most resilient of Italian religious (and political) institutions: the holy Roman Catholic Church.

... to be continued. 

Chapter Two

The Intermediate State (5)

In previous articles, I have set forth and defended the Reformed doctrine of the intermediate state of elect believers. At the moment of death and by means of death, which Christ has made the servant of our salvation, God separates the soul and the body. What God has joined

together in the creation of man in the beginning and in the conception of each individual human, God can, and does, put asunder. In the body, the believer sleeps in the grave until Christ awakens him in the resurrection of the body. In the soul, the believer is raised by Jesus into conscious, heavenly life and glory immediately upon the believer's dying.

The preceding article in this series on eschatology defended the Reformed doctrine of the intermediate state against the error of "soul sleep" and the related error of the "total death" of the believer until the resurrection of the body. In this article, I defend

the truth of the intermediate state against another error, the error of purgatory.

Purgatory

In Roman Catholic theology and practice, purgatory is the place in which the souls of the saints, with the rare exception, are purged of the pollution of sin that continues to defile them upon their death. The saints purge themselves of this pollution by suffering punishment for their sins. Only after thus purging themselves by satisfying for their sins are the souls of the saints received into heavenly bliss and glory.

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Rome adopted the doctrine of purgatory as official, binding church dogma in the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent (A.D. 1563).

The [Roman] Catholic Church... has...taught...in this ecumenical Synod that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar ("Decree Concerning Purgatory," in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 2, Baker, repr. 1983, 198).

Significantly, Trent also taught purgatory in its defense of justification by faith and works.

If any one saith, that after the grace of Justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such wise that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened [to him]: let him be anathema ("Decree on Justification," in Schaff, *Creeds*, 117)

Inseparably bound up with the monstrous heresy and heretical monstrosity that is the Roman Catholic doctrine and practice of purgatory are prayers for the dead (which lessen the torment and shorten the stay of the dead in purgatory), indulgences (which are papal certificates bought with money or earned by meritorious works also lessening the torment and shortening the stay of the dead in purgatory), and masses for the dead (which are, in Roman Catholic theology, the priests' sacrificing of Christ again and again "in an unbloody manner" for the remission of the sins of those satisfying for those sins in purgatory).

A Protestant recalls the powerful role that purgatory and

its attendant evil, indulgences, played in the sixteenth century Reformation of the church. In the providence of God, purgatory occasioned the Reformation. The Roman cleric Tetzl was selling indulgences in the precincts of Wittenberg with the effective ditty, "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." Tetzl dug deeply into the pockets of the German faithful, as Rome still does today, into the pockets of her members in all nations, by preaching purgatory with this pathetic plea: "Listen to the voices of your dear dead relatives and friends, beseeching you and saying, 'Pity us, pity us. We are in dire torment from which you can redeem us for a pittance.'"

Against this crass expression of Rome's fundamental false doctrine of justification by faith and works, Luther reacted with the zeal born of the gospel of justification by faith alone.

The Roman Catholic Council, Vatican II (A.D. 1963-1965), renewed and confirmed the doctrine of purgatory as Roman Catholic dogma.

This most sacred Synod accepts... the venerable faith of our ancestors regarding this vital fellowship with our brethren who are in heavenly glory or who are still being purified after death. It proposes again the decrees of the...Council of Trent (*The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J., The America Press, 1966, 83, 84)

Some of His [Christ's] disciples are exiles on earth. Some have finished with this life and are being purified. Others are in glory (*Documents of Vatican II*, 80).

[Vatican II teaches, approves, and confirms the doctrine and practice that] because it is "a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins" (2 Mach. 12:46), she [the Roman Catholic Church] has also offered prayers for them (*Documents of Vatican II*, 81).

The Greek Orthodox Church also teaches the doctrine of purgatory and practices the attendant superstitions, particularly prayers for the dead, although it differs from the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine of purgatory in incidental points.

The Greeks teach of one eternal fire alone, understanding that the temporal punishment of sinful souls consists in that they for a time depart into a place of darkness and sorrow, are punished by being deprived of the Divine light, and are purified—that is, liberated from this place of darkness and woe—by means of prayers, the Holy Eucharist, and deeds of charity, and not by fire [whereas Rome teaches purification by "purgatorial fire"—DJE] (Ivan N. Ostroumoff, *The History of the Council of Florence*, tr. Basil Popoff, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1971, 48, 49).

The teaching of purgatory is unbiblical, indeed, non-biblical. Not only does the doctrine conflict with the plain teaching of Scripture that all believers are taken immediately upon their death to Paradise to be with Christ, as earlier articles in this series have showed, but the doctrine lacks even a semblance of evidence in the canonical Scriptures. Pope Gregory I ("the Great," A.D. 540-604), regarded with some right as the father of purgatory, appealed to Jesus' words in Matthew 12:32, "Who-soever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." It was bold of that pope to base the vast structure of purgatory on the exceedingly slim foundation of a text that expressly *denies* that sins will be forgiven in the world to come. The text does not imply that some sins will be forgiven in the world to come. "Neither in this world, neither in the world to come" is a very strong way of denying the possibility of the for-

givenness of the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

The only other text in the canonical Scriptures that Rome half-heartedly appeals to as teaching purgatory is I Corinthians 3:12-15: "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." The only possible, superficial connection this text has with purgatory is its mention of fire in the context of the saving of some in the final judgment. What the apostle teaches in the passage is that some ministers, although personally elect believers, who will be saved at the final judgment, corrupt their ministerial work in the church so that their bad works—teachings and behavior—will be burned up as worthless ("wood, hay, stubble").

Rome itself realizes that there is no proof of purgatory in the canonical Scriptures. Therefore, she has always grounded her doctrine of purgatory on the teaching of prayers for the dead in the apocryphal book of II Maccabees, chapter 12, verses 42-46:

But the most valiant Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, forasmuch as they say before their eyes what had happened, because of the sins of those that were slain. And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection, (for if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed

superfluous and vain to pray for the dead,) and because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins (Douay-Rheims version, Baltimore, 1899).

This appeal to II Maccabees brings home to Protestants the significance of the Reformation's distinction of the "sacred books" of the canonical Scriptures from the "apocryphal" books accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, including I and II Maccabees, and its exclusion of the apocryphal books from the canon. In the words of the Belgic Confession, II Maccabees is "far from having such power and efficacy as that we may from [its] testimony confirm any point of faith or of the Christian religion; much less detract from the authority of the other sacred books" (Belgic Confession, Articles 4 and 6, in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005, 25, 26).

Purgatory is a denial of the cross of Christ. Fundamental to that heresy is the teaching that Christ did not, by His one sacrifice of Himself on the cross, fully satisfy the justice of God with regard to all the guilt of all the sins of those for whom He gave His life. According to the doctrine of purgatory, after Christ died, in spite of His triumphant declaration, "It is finished," some guilt of some sins of those for whom He died remains unpaid. Sinners must see to the payment of this guilt and must satisfy divine justice regarding these sins themselves. They must do so in the fires of purgatory. This doctrine is condemned by Hebrews 10:12, 14: "But this man [Jesus Christ], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...for by one of-

fering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Contemporary Roman Catholic theologians and apologists exert themselves to minimize and even obscure this aspect of the Roman doctrine of purgatory, especially in ecumenical discussions. They emphasize rather that purgatory is intended to purify the dead. But the fact remains—the fact of Rome's confessional statement concerning purgatory—that this purging takes place by means of the suffering of the punishment of a certain aspect of the guilt of sin.

The doctrine of purgatory is destructive of the hope and comfort of those who believe it, in the face of death, that "king of terrors." At the instant of death, the Roman Catholic can look forward to the torments of excruciatingly painful fire in the punitive wrath of God (the Roman Catholic will be paying for his or her sins). The only difference between this fire and the fire of hell is that eventually the purgatorial fire will burn itself out in his or her soul.

The Italian poet Dante gave vivid expression to the agonies of purgatory in his *Purgatorio*. What purgatory is both in Roman Catholic theology and in the mind of the people Dante expressed when, about to enter purgatory, he said: "Now shall I sing that second kingdom [hell being the first kingdom and heaven, the third—DJE] given/the soul of man wherein to purge its guilt/ and so grow worthy to ascend to Heaven" (Dante Alighieri, *The Purgatorio*, tr. John Ciardi, New American Library, 1957, 320). The agony of purgatory, Dante pictured in many descriptions of torment, including that of fire: "And there I was—the flames/ to the left of me, and the abyss to the right/...I could not help but look into the fire./Then I saw spirits moving through the flames/...as long as they must stay/within the holy fire that

burns them there" (*The Purgatorio*, 257, 258).

Understandably, purgatory has always filled dying Roman Catholics with dread, and the bereaved with anguish.

Luther was not too strong, therefore, when, in the Smalcald Articles (A.D. 1537), he damned purgatory as the "vermin" begotten of the "dragon's tail" and as the "devil's ghost." He was right also in exposing its fundamental error: "For it [purgatory] conflicts with the chief article: only Christ, and not human works, can set souls free (Galatians 5:1)" ("The Smalcald Articles," in *Con-*

cordia: The Lutheran Confessions, Concordia, 2005, 291).

The gospel of salvation by grace alone in its basic tenet of justification by faith alone demolishes the fiction of purgatory. The dying believer is justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ, who paid the price of redemption from sin, death, and hellish agonies completely. No wrath of God remains, only the bliss and glory of the divine grace in Jesus Christ. Being with Christ and, in Him, enjoying the beatific vision of God, immediately upon death, in the soul, are his sure hope and mighty consolation in the face of impending death.

With regard to the purifying of the soul, without which the dying believer cannot be taken into the presence of God in heaven, that holy of holies, Christ wonderfully purges the soul of all the defilement of sin at the instant of death by His Holy Spirit.

Hellish fires need not accomplish any purging.

Hellish fires, suffered by the soul of the believer after death, *could* not accomplish such purging.

Only the grace of the Spirit of the crucified Christ can, and does, wash away our sin. 

A Prayerful Meditation for Courage

Written in the teeth of Hurricane Ike, September 12, 2008.

Our gracious Father in heaven, we tremble before Thy sovereign power shown forth in the blasting storm and ravaging flood and all such as the worldly call tragic, natural events. Hold before us and for all the world to see that these are not horrific destructions that capriciously fall upon men from time to time, but are in truth public displays of the directed power of Thy sovereign hand.

Strengthen our courage in proclaiming this before men, for we know that most will turn their backs on us—and on Thee—in their proud rebellion, blasphemously declaring that even if there is a God, they will not have such a one as Thou art. Help us be witness that all things come from Thy royal scepter, from spinning the earth about its axis, to breathing life into a newborn babe, to working the eternal destiny of every man.

Help us, O Lord, for in the face of Thy fearsome earthly cataclysms our own bodies quake, and we, too, earnestly long to be spared. Deliver us, if it be Thy will, and strengthen our frailties in these godless days. Lift our hearts to reach up to Thee by the power of Thy Holy Spirit to give praise and awe-filled honor that it is in Thy providential counsel to send forth such terror and dread. Thy ways are not our ways. They are past our finding out. Yet surely these calamities do sound forth thunderous forewarnings of that Day of Thy fury when Thou wilt destroy the whole earth by fire, and with it all wickedness, evil, and sin.

We pray, O God, as our flesh trembles before these disastrous foreshadows, that Thou wilt give us true hearts to witness before men that we bow before Thee in awe-struck, loving submission to Thy sovereign purpose in all things.

And keep our hearts alive to this, especially when all may seem to be well with us in the world.

For our Lord and Savior's sake, draw us close to Thee, that our feet may rest more lightly upon the earth. Amen.

Joel Sugg

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Historical Introduction to Dispensationalism (7)

“Literalism” As a Weapon to Combat Liberalism

False teachers often take advantage of other false teachings to promote themselves. They start by pointing out what is unbiblical about what others are saying, and this prepares their listeners or readers to listen to them when they suggest their own theological system as an alternative. With this in mind we turn to consider some of the false teachings that were on the rise at the same time that dispensationalism became popular.

More people began listening to the dispensationalists when new theories arose in science and theology that clearly went against the fundamental teachings of Scripture. The nineteenth century was marked by the rise of what is sometimes called “liberal theology” or “modernism,” which embraced the philosophy of the Enlightenment and denied fundamental doctrines such as the fall of Adam, the virgin birth, and the deity of Christ. Dispensationalists took advantage of this situation to set themselves up to be the Bible-believing warriors, fighting off liberal views in theology with their “literal” interpretations of Scripture. Thus, to understand the rise of dispensationalism, it is helpful to consider the enemy of

liberalism that it was supposed to be able to combat.

Using “Literalism” against Liberalism

The nineteenth century was characterized by the rising popularity of theories in worldly science and liberal theology that clearly attacked the authority of Scripture. Uniformitarianism in geology, evolutionism in biology, and the higher-critical view of interpreting the Bible, all denied the accuracy of Scripture.

First there was *uniformitarianism*, which arose in the first half of the nineteenth century. According to this geological theory, all the present-day formations and fossils in the earth’s crust can be explained as being brought about by geological processes known to us today—processes that have been operating for a very long period of time. Such a theory was recognized immediately to be a denial of Scripture’s teaching concerning the creation and the flood. First of all, it required the earth to have been around for an extremely long period of time, and thus denied the creation narrative that spoke of a six-day creation taking place only a few thousand years before the birth of Christ. Furthermore, it blatantly denied that there ever was a worldwide flood. The opening of the windows of heaven and the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep would be examples of geological processes that are not seen today.

But according to the theory of uniformitarianism, all the geological processes that operated in the past are processes that we still see operating today. Thus this new “scientific” theory was a direct attack upon the authority of Scripture.

Next there arose *Darwinism* or *evolutionism*, which took this idea that the earth and the living creatures on it have been around for an extremely long period of time, and added to it the teaching that the creatures we see today have evolved from simpler creatures in the very distant past by means of what Darwin called “natural selection.” In addition to denying the six-day creation, this new theory denied the following fundamental doctrines of Holy Scripture:

1. There was a first man named Adam, who was created on the sixth day.
2. Adam’s wife was formed by God out of Adam’s rib.
3. God created the first man out of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.
4. Man was uniquely created by God in His image.
5. Death entered the world as the punishment for sin, which means that no living creatures died before the fall of Adam.

Uniformitarianism and evolutionism were two popular theories of modern science, and they both emphatically denied the accuracy and authority of Holy Scripture. Prior to this,

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many professing Christians had thought that the findings of this world's scientists would always serve to confirm what the Bible teaches. Now the scientists of the world were coming up with theories that were clearly contrary to some of the most fundamental doctrines taught in the Scriptures.

Some who professed Christ opted not to fight against these new theories, but to embrace them. But this meant they would have to find some way to argue that these new teachings were not really in conflict with Scripture. One method that was commonly adopted then, and that is still adopted by many today, is to take the beginning chapters of Genesis and make them into fictional stories written to get across certain ideas and not meant to be read as an actual account of real historical events. Whether they called these stories allegories, myths, or something else, one thing was clear—they denied that these stories were literally true.

This brings us to a third enemy that arose, known as *higher-criticism*. Those who adopted the methods of the higher critics treated the Scriptures as though they originated with man, and not God. They subjected to critical analysis not only the beginning chapters of Genesis, but the whole of the Scriptures, as though the writers of Scripture were inventing stories to express their own religious experiences. The references to miracles were seen as simply mythical ways of expressing one's faith. As for our Lord Jesus Christ, He was often made out to be merely a man who taught moral principles, and who served as an example to others by the way He was willing to lay down His life for what He believed.

During a time when these blatant denials of Scripture were becoming increasingly popular—not only in the world, but also

in the churches—many began to listen to the dispensationalists. At the same time that more and more people were referring to the Scriptures as myths, there were also many that were reacting against this. During these circumstances many found the dispensational method of interpreting the Scriptures "literally" to be appealing.

The enemies to which dispensationalists pointed could be easily seen, and dispensationalists took advantage of this to promote themselves as the ones called by God to sound the alarm. Proclaiming themselves to be the only ones consistently holding to the literal meaning of Scripture, they urged people to leave the apostatizing churches and to join their interdenominational movement of independent Bible-believing fundamentalists.

Now, in fairness we must say that there were, after all, certain things the dispensationalists were correctly pointing out. First, they were rightly and loudly proclaiming that the rampant apostasy in the churches was an indication that Christ was soon going to return to execute judgment. Secondly, they showed from Scripture that, contrary to the teachings of the postmillennialists, things were not going to get better and better, but worse and worse.

But the dispensational method of interpreting Scripture "literally" was actually a deadly error in disguise. For all their boasts about holding to what Scripture literally says, they were actually denying what Scripture teaches. The recognition of this fact is extremely important.

The Illusion of Dispensational "Literalism"

Repeatedly dispensationalists proclaim themselves to be the only ones who consistently interpret the Scriptures literally. They acknowledge, of course,

that many others claim to hold to the literal meaning of what Scripture says. But dispensationalists insist they are the only ones who hold to the literal meaning *consistently*.

The difference, in their mind, has to do with how one interprets God's promise to give Israel the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. If one interprets this to be a promise of heavenly land to the church in Christ, the dispensationalists call this "spiritualizing" the text. The consistent literalists, they say, will interpret this to be a promise of earthly land only to the physical descendants of Jacob.

Now, by using this argument they are actually rejecting what Scripture literally says. In the Bible we find not only God's promises, but also the *interpretation* of these promises. Holding to the literal meaning of Scripture, therefore, involves holding to the literal meaning of God's own interpretation of His promises.

For example, God says that this promise to Israel was a promise of heavenly land. God speaks of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Hebrews 11, and says of them:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly (Heb. 11:13-16a).

The promise referred to here is of a heavenly land, and the patriarchs knew it. Furthermore, Scripture says this promise was to Christ (i.e., Abraham's Seed), and to all who are in Christ by faith:

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:16, 29).

So one who truly holds to the literal meaning of Scripture will hold to the literal meaning of God's own interpretation of His promises, and will maintain that the promise of the land of Canaan was a promise of heavenly land to Christ and all those who are in Christ by faith.

Furthermore, God promised the land of Canaan as an *everlasting* possession. Yet dispensationalists say this promise will be fulfilled when Israel possesses the earthly land for a thousand years—hardly a literal interpretation.

The following passages clearly refer to the glorious everlasting age, in which we will live with God forever in the new heaven and the new earth. But the dispensationalists claim that they refer to the coming carnal millennial age:

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore (Ezek. 37:26-28).

The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of

thy mourning shall be ended (Is. 60:19-20).

When they take these passages and claim that they refer to a future millennial kingdom for the Jews, they are left with a problem. These passages speak of the coming age as everlasting, but they claim that it will last only for a thousand years.

So how do they attempt to get around that? By attributing this to the inaccurate view of the prophets—although dispensationalists would not put it quite that way. They say that the prophets viewed the millennium to be everlasting, even though it really was going to last for only one millennium. Dwight Pentecost, one of the leading dispensationalists of the recent past, writes: "That which characterizes the millennial age is not viewed as temporary, but eternal."¹

But how can this be said to be a "literal" interpretation of Scripture? The passages quoted above, and many others like them, clearly refer to the coming age as everlasting. To take these passages and claim that the prophets *viewed* the age that way, when really it was only going to last a thousand years, is clearly to reject what Scripture literally says. A thousand years is not forever. To use the language of the dispensationalists, when God says forever, He means forever. Thus to hold to the literal meaning of Scripture one must confess that the real Seed of Abraham will possess and rule the heavenly promised land forever and ever.

In other words, dispensationalism's "literalism" is actually an illusion, which a believer can clearly see when he looks at it more closely. Yet it became very popular in an era characterized

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (1958; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Dunham Publishing, 1966), 490.

by the rise of liberal theology, with its outright denial of the fundamental truths of the Christian faith. When Scripture's teachings were being so blatantly rejected, many were persuaded to grab the imaginary weapon of dispensationalism's "literalism" to combat the foe.

"Literalism" and the Crucifixion of Christ

The dispensational view of interpreting Scripture is partially rooted in their carnal longing for an earthly kingdom. In other words, their hermeneutical method does not determine their view of the kingdom, but their carnal view of the kingdom determines their hermeneutical method. Their longing for a carnal, earthly kingdom is first, and their "literal" method of interpreting the Scriptures is used in an effort to make the Scriptures teach that God has promised such a kingdom.

Thus the "literalism" of the dispensationalists is not only deceptive, but also very dangerous. As some have pointed out before, this is really the same carnal view of the kingdom that was held by the Jews that crucified our Lord:

Then as to *what* this modern system of teaching is, it will be a surprise to most of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ to learn that, in respect to the central and vitally important subject of the *Kingdom of God*, twentieth century dispensationalism is practically identical with first century *rabbinism*.² For the cardinal doctrine of the Jewish rabbis of Christ's day was that, according to the predictions of the prophets of Israel, the purpose and result of the Messiah's mission would be the re-constituting of the Jewish nation; the re-occupation by them of the land of Palestine; the setting up again of the earthly throne of David; and

² Rabbinism is a name for the beliefs, practices, and precepts of the Jewish rabbis of that time.

the exaltation of the people of Israel to the place of supremacy in the world.

Now, seeing that a doctrine is known by its fruits, let us recall what effect this doctrine concerning the Kingdom of God had upon the *orthodox Jews* who so earnestly believed it in that day. And in view of what it impelled those zealous men to do, let us ask ourselves if there is not grave reason to fear its effect upon the *orthodox Christians* who hold and zealously teach it in our day? The effect then was that, when Christ came to His own people, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was at hand, but making it known that that Kingdom did not correspond at all to their idea of it; when He said, "My Kingdom is *not* of this world," and taught that, so far from being Jewish, it was of such sort that a man must be *born of the Spirit* in order to

enter it, then they rejected Him ("received Him not") hated Him, betrayed Him and caused Him to be put to death.¹

One who takes note of this similarity is not surprised to see how dispensationalists are so supportive of the carnal dreams of the Israelis still today.

What dispensationalists call the "literal" interpretation is really a carnal interpretation—an interpretation that appeals to the sinful flesh of fallen man. Because such a view has led to great evil in the past, we should not be surprised when we see its evil fruit in our own day.

¹ Philip Mauro, *The Gospel of the Kingdom with an Examination of Modern Dispensationalism* (Boston: Hamilton Brothers, 1928), 21–22.

There are a number of other aspects that could be written about in this historical introduction to dispensationalism, but I think it is time to move on. Lord willing, there will be an opportunity to refer to a number of these along the way.

Starting with the next article, we will begin to go through the main teachings of the dispensationalists, endeavoring to show not only what is wrong with what they teach, but also what the truth is over against what they say. For God raises up false theological systems for a reason, that in the way of considering and refuting their arguments we ourselves might grow in our understanding of the truths concerning the last things. 

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Jason Kortering

Working Towards an Indigenous Church (4) A Self-supporting Church

Money and missions is like mixing water and oil; they just don't seem to work together. More problems arise from this need than from any other. Notice, I said "need" because that is what it is. You cannot do mission work without money, and the need to spend money in the mission field is only too obvious. God made man dependent upon the earth for his daily bread. All through history the tension between those who have and those who have not has caused strife among the people and wars among the na-

tions. It has affected the church as well. The solution is not to avoid money; it is to learn how to spend it wisely and in obedience to the King of the church.

The best way for the sending church to avoid mistakes in the use of its money is to keep in view its calling to establish, in the foreign country, an *indigenous* church. When we lose sight of this we commit the gravest of errors, and when we keep this in focus, we at least have a blueprint for wisdom that comes to us from the Word of God.

In this article, which touches so briefly on these points, we mention two common errors that have been committed by the church in the past in her use of money in foreign missions.

First, the sending church built a "compound" within which she provided a rather comfortable lifestyle for her missionaries, the walls of which separated the mission enterprise from the local people. Granted that in the early stages of mission work such an arrangement may be necessary, e.g., for safety, for the physical health of the western missionaries who are trying to survive in this foreign land, and such like; nevertheless the goal must be that this arrangement be temporary and that as quickly as possible the walls must come down. The problem in the past was (and still is) that it became a permanent arrangement. And that caused big problems. The mission enterprise soon exploded into such

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an elaborate project that the local people were never able to run it properly; it was way beyond their financial means. Within the compound a church was built, a hospital followed, schools were added, and all these activities cost a lot of money. This causes barriers. The local mentality says that behind those walls is a western mission work, it is foreign, it is not our work. Jealousy ensues; the work is controlled by the people who have money, the foreigners. In some cases it became so bad that the sending church threatened the mission church to conform to their way or money would be withdrawn. Money becomes an abuse of power.

Second, the distribution of money among the local people was done improperly. This happened in two ways. The missionary and perhaps his co-workers held the pocketbook. He decided who would receive help and who would not. In the name of Christian benevolence, money was distributed. This causes problems because the missionary is the least qualified to determine fit objects of mercy (he doesn't know the local standards and can easily be deceived). As soon as a foreign source begins to distribute money, the perception of the local poor is to run after available money. This has produced "rice-bowl Christians" and jealousy among those who take an interest in the gospel.

In addition to errors in spending money for the poor, the temptation was always present to pay local men to function as pastors and local missionaries within the foreign culture. Every missionary learns quickly that if indigenous mission work will be done, the need for local officebearers is top priority. The temptation is to train capable and spiritually-alert local men and put them in positions of leadership and *pay* them a salary. This seems so logical and necessary that it is

very easy for a missionary and sending church to be blind to its consequences. This elevates such a man among his own people, who tend to view him as benefiting from the presence of foreigners. Jealousy follows because he has a better life than they do, even if every effort is put forth to keep it simple. History has also shown that such activity makes them lazy in their work. Less comes from them when they have guaranteed income. Obviously, not everyone who receives such help is corrupted, but the dangers lurk. Other considerations must come forth.

How does keeping an indigenous church in view help avoid these mistakes in the use of money in the missionary work of the church? Perhaps we should address this question a bit differently. What direction do we receive from the Bible and the missionary work of the early church that may assist us in this area of the great work of missions? In the interest of brevity, we run the risk of being simplistic, but let's focus on a few principles.

First, those who bring the gospel must also live off the gospel. This must be explained in this way: a preacher who is called by God and commissioned in His church to bring the Word of God to the people who hear it and grow by it must also receive financial income from those who benefit from his presence. This is evident from the instruction Jesus gave to His disciples in Matthew 10:6ff. when He sent them out two by two. They were to take no extra clothing, no money, no food, but expect to receive their needs from the people who would benefit from their ministry. If the disciples did this, and if the locals rejected them, they were to depart and go elsewhere.

It might seem as if Paul practiced otherwise, since he refused money from the people to whom he ministered the word. But we

must remember that his circumstances were different, in that in the culture of his day, itinerant teachers and philosophers travelled about benefiting financially from the people, and they had a bad reputation. Paul did not want to be identified with such men, so he refused money from the churches. Instead he worked as a tent-maker to supply his own financial needs. Even then, he insisted that he was properly entitled to their financial support; in fact it was their duty to provide it. Paul quotes the words of Jesus in I Corinthians 9:14, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." In his moving words to the elders of Ephesus upon his departure for Jerusalem and an uncertain future, he said,

I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so laboring, ye ought to support the weak, to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:33-35).

From this instruction, we draw conclusions that pertain both to the missionary and to local pastors.

We err if we conclude from the above that a missionary must depend on the locals to support him and that he must live on the level of locals. Even pioneering missionaries like Adoniram Judson in Burma, William Carey in India, and David Livingstone in Africa put forth great effort to live on the level of the locals, but received some financial assistance from the sending organizations. The missionary lives of the gospel from the sending church; that is the nature of missions. Even then he must exercise great wisdom on what level he lives when he

ministers among them. Great offense arises when the missionary family exports to the foreign land all the conveniences they are accustomed to have in America.

The sacrifice required of today's missionaries is not on the level of the pioneers, although sacrifice is necessary for the missionary to live simply among the people. Accepting such a call requires of the missionary and his family much self-denial. On the other hand, they should not be expected to live like the locals. When that was tried in the past, it had very limited success. The locals do not expect a missionary to live as they do. Missionaries are always viewed as "foreign." They are given much leeway to adjust to their new lifestyle. Consulting other missionaries working in the country and learning from their experience is good. Eventually goodwill can be built up among the converts, and discussing with them the "felt needs" of the missionaries can lead to understanding.

When God provides local men to serve as leaders of the indigenous church, the training of these men is crucial. Our point here is not how to train them, but the use of money in doing this. Two problems arise if we train them outside the country in a foreign school. It will expose them to wealth and to a lifestyle that can harm them. They learn to like this way of living while away at school and they see how the people live in wealth and later struggle with dissatisfaction with the level of provision they receive in the mission church setting.

Keeping them home for teaching has many advantages, but this too can be spoiled if we begin to provide a higher way of life for them because they are students. The missionary training center can be elaborate, can provide a wonderful study environment, can give good meals to the students, can provide all expenses,

including transportation, books, and even computers. Already a wrong message is sent to the future pastors and evangelists. If they do church work, it will advance them financially. This problem is perpetuated when they finish school and take up work and are paid by the mission outreach to do that work. A wedge is driven between this man and his church, a financial wedge that the local church probably will never be able to remove.

These issues are not always present. God raises up godly men who are not affected by this. They are special gifts from God. There are others, however, who are affected. Human nature is the same all over the world. Our old flesh loves money, and only the grace of God can help us to overcome this temptation.

Alternatively, it is far better to teach the future leader in his own setting. Remember, the goal is an indigenous church, to keep the man as closely connected to his own church as possible. By teaching third-world pastors in their own country and in the context of their own church life and on the level of financial living that they are accustomed to, the money barrier is not created. The best way to preserve this in the villages is to insist that when God raises up a man for training, he continue to do his daily work. Alongside his own occupation, he can study and prepare for church leadership. He can continue to earn his own wages while he engages in outreach ministry. The difficulty with this proposal is that in many countries poverty is so great that there is no gainful employment available. The temptation, then, is to set up a pay schedule for these laborers in God's church and meet their daily needs from the sending church. A better alternative is not to pay wages in this manner, but to have them continue to search for work, just

as all the members of the congregation are expected to do.

The congregation must follow the biblical direction to pay their pastor what they can. Then, after all is said and done, a system of diaconal help is put into place. The office of deacon as well as elder is recognized and men are trained to take the "widow's mite" from among the people and share this with the poor among them. This includes the pastor if they are not able to meet his needs. Then, if help is needed from an outside source, the deacons work with the mission sending-church as to how some benevolent money can be provided, and that in turn is distributed among the people, including the pastor if he has needs. In this way there is no discrimination. The authorities, such as Nevius, do allow for key men in cities who take on special positions of leadership to become paid workers (see p. 91, *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches*).

I might add here that emphasis upon the deacons' office is critical towards financial independence in an indigenous church. As a proper emphasis on the ruling elder is critical to self-government, and the same emphasis upon the teaching elder or pastor is critical towards self-propagation, so the deacons office is towards self-supporting. This is a sadly neglected office in mission outreach, as it is sadly neglected in the Christian churches as a whole. This requires that training of men to serve as deacons be done just as well as the training of elders and pastors. The local men who serve as deacons are best qualified to know what poverty is, who needs help, and what resources are available to assist. They can determine who needs help with food, who needs clothing, who needs medical attention, how doctor and hospital bills should be paid, and what are legitimate needs.

It is true that in the New Testament missionary practices of Paul, he did not involve himself in financial matters of the local churches. He did not give them money or receive from them money. He did receive gifts from individuals within the churches, e.g., Philippi, for himself and also for the poor that were in Jerusalem. Concerning these poor, Paul visited the mission churches and not only requested their support, but expected it, and if they lacked or held back, he admonished them to be more generous. This would indicate that the general financial circumstances of the Roman world allowed men to be gainfully employed. Third-world nations for a long time have had very little opportunity to grow financially, mostly due to bad government. This has affected the opportunity of the citizens to work and to earn money for their daily bread. This seems to be changing. Global economy forces governments to advance their own financial potential, and this affords opportunity for more of the locals to work. This does

not relate to all of them, but it is changing, and within almost all the countries that have governments that care, there are opportunities for Christians to be gainfully employed. We recognize that being a Christian is still a big hardship for many seeking work within such countries. Only God knows how this will affect the Christians within the countries of the world in the next decade. Jesus assures us that the poor will always be with us.

One final point ought to be made. What about "seed money" for individual self-help projects?

There is much discussion and also difference of viewpoint on this aspect of financial assistance. Care has to be exercised that the sending church not become distracted with business enterprises. The church has the calling to advance the gospel through establishing indigenous churches that practice self-government, self-propagation, and self-support. It fits the spirit of helping the mission church to be self-supporting when individual Christians within the local mission who may not be able to find

work are encouraged to run their own small business to earn their daily bread. This can be handled by the deacons of the sending church or individuals under their supervision. Wisdom is required, but it has been done successfully. The scope can be anything from helping an individual operate a sewing machine to make clothing for a larger local company for export, to assisting individuals to set up a manufacturing or farming business that can employ others. The old adage rings true, "You can continue to give fish to a family every day (benevolence) or you can help them by buying some fishing gear so they can catch their own fish."

Due to space constraint, we did not quote from the three sources indicated in other articles. For reference you can find helpful instruction in John Nevius' *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches*, pages 21-26, and 89; J.H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, pages 96-100, 208-217; and Roland Allen's *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's Or Ours?*, pages 49-61. 

Bring the books...

Rev. William Langerak

Welcome to our new rubric! Like the fresh-faced new teacher who shows up the first day of school after the long summer break, our rubric deserves a proper introduction. Otherwise we classmates don't know who she is or what she is doing here. This article intends to do just that.

In keeping with an unspoken, perhaps unnoticed, but long-standing tradition of the *Standard Bearer*, the title for this rubric is lifted directly from the

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Authorized Version of the Bible. In this particular case, II Timothy 4:13. It is a fitting piece of Scripture to use, because it helps describe our methods and purpose with this new column. In it the apostle Paul, writing from prison, tells Timothy to bring with him to Rome a coat that he left at Troas with a fellow named Carpus. Then he adds, "Bring... the books...especially the parchments."

Legitimately, for our purposes, we abbreviated this phrase to "Bring the books..." Although Paul uses two different words, "books" and "parchments," he actually asks for one class of

things, scrolls. He distinguishes only between the materials used to make them. 'Books' were papyrus scrolls. 'Parchments' were scrolls of animal skin, and, being more durable, were more valuable and likely one reason he especially wanted them. But both were scrolls, or what today we would call, generically, books. Nowadays, the apostle might say, "Bring the paperbacks, especially the hardcovers."

This brief command, "Bring the books..." is insightful. Paul was a reader! This Spirit-filled apostle, who was taken up into heaven itself, received visions and revelations of the Lord, and

was personally instructed by Jesus, read books. Paul had a library! This poor preacher, who often labored night and day as a tent-maker just to make ends meet, saw fit to spend a portion of his meager living to purchase books, which, in those days before the printing press, were also expensive. What foolishness then, that ordinary Christian men and women would now consider reading quite worthless and a small library a waste of good money.

Whereas Paul's books were physically brought to him, we will 'bring the books' by way of short reviews published regularly here. We will do so for the same reason the apostle issued his directive—their value. Like his coat, Paul wanted the books because they were personally necessary. But—and this is significant—inasmuch as he was separated unto the gospel of God as an apostle (Rom. 1:1), any personal benefit further served his ministry in the kingdom of heaven. So also for us. And not just clergy either. Since all Christians hold the office of prophet, whereby they confess the name of Jesus, bringing the books not only has personal value, but benefits the glorious kingdom in which we labor. It is an effective way to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt.

Of course books, whether papyrus or parchment, hardcover or soft, have little intrinsic worth. Their value is in the content, the particular knowledge they preserve, and they are beneficial only if that knowledge is transmitted by reading. Therefore, by 'bringing the books,' we intend to encourage reading itself. For the modern prophet, reading is not merely an art, and one quickly being lost. But it is essential to a healthy spiritual life. With good reason our lover of books also exhorted Timothy to "give atten-

dance to reading." For one, the more sure word of prophecy is in written form, Scripture. Reading ought to be developed, if only to assist our comprehension of The Book. Besides, reading serves the hearing of the Word. Faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17). And hearing is processed by a developed mind, proving what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2). Sadly, in our frenetic age of I-pod, Facebook, TiVo, and 200 channel TV, Christian men and women are losing their mind. Lacking the ability to concentrate, think critically, and organize thoughts logically because their reading skills are so undeveloped, many not only struggle to understand Scripture, but they can hardly make sense of a sermon without outlines, props, PowerPoint, or theatrics. We are not immune to this disease.

The *Standard Bearer* does not merely want to encourage reading in general, however. We also want to promote the reading of certain kinds of books. Wisely, Solomon warned that "of making many books there is no end" (Eccl. 12:12). Some are simply a waste of time to read. Others ought not be read because they promote filth and invoke vile passions. Still others, although perhaps personally appealing due to their knowledge of a particular aspect of the physical realm, would be inappropriate for the general readership of this magazine. I doubt, for example, that my personal enthusiasm for books on relativity theory, quantum physics, and WWII history is shared by most of you. We intend, therefore, to promote certain books highly valued for broad-based, spiritually beneficial content.

However, we will not restrict those books we bring unnecessarily. When Paul asked for his books, the Holy Spirit did not inform us of their specific content. Good thing. Otherwise some

overly pious soul might suppose the only worthwhile books were what Paul read. There are people like that, who imagine the only good books are what ministers write, ministers read, or what ministers recommend. That is one reason we will encourage reviews in this rubric from the laity—we're interested in any books our readers think spiritually beneficial in their everyday life and work in the kingdom of heaven. But it would also be a mistake to suppose that, because we don't know exactly what parchments Paul owned, they were limited to his own epistles and a good dogmatics. We might be surprised at what he read. He knew the wisdom of the philosophers as well as of Solomon (Col. 2:8), was familiar with Greek poets (Acts 17:18-28) as well as the Hebrew, and studied the truth of Jesus as well as traditions of the Pharisees (Acts 22:3).

So expect us to bring a wide variety of books—books that facilitate spiritual development of the kingdom citizens both in their mind of Christ (theology, apologetics, and biblical studies) and holy body (practical living and devotionals); new books that give the present generation of the church fresh insight, and old books that connect us to the church universal by transmitting its rich heritage, knowledge, and experience (Bible and church history, biographies, missions); books that are soundly orthodox and that develop the truth (like RFPA materials), and books that may contain worldly wisdom, trends, and heresies so we can exhort, convince, and oppose the gainsayers and deceivers (Tit. 1:9-13).

You may expect several other things besides variety as we 'bring the books.' Expect reviews longer than simply a book notice, but shorter than an in-depth analysis and critique, so we are encouraged actually to read the book

itself, not just the review. And at the risk of being charged with crass commercialism, expect us to give you the precise information needed in order to go purchase the book yourself and build your library. Since reviews will be brief, and we assume a spiritually mature, discerning, *Standard Bearer* reading audience, expect reviews that may not point out ev-

ery error, weakness, or doctrinal deviation in a book, but neither that give place to the devil. And expect a wide spectrum of reviewers, young and old, laity and officebearers, students and teachers, men and women. If you have recently enjoyed a good book that you feel would be beneficial to our audience, we encourage you to submit a review to this writer.

Don't be intimidated or worry that not everyone will personally agree, because we also expect that our readership, being knit together in the bond of love, will also exercise goodwill, kind judgment, and gracious patience.

So, now you know more about our new teacher. Please welcome her this year as she brings the books. Enjoy. 

Annual RFPA Secretary's Report

Mr. John Buitter

September 25, 2008

The Annual Meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association marks the completion of another year of publishing, and the seeking of the Association's approval of plans for the coming year. This includes the election of four new board members to replace those retiring after three years of service, and the adoption of a budget for the new publishing year. We, the board, take this opportunity to mark, with you, the Lord's blessing over the past year, and years, and to seek His blessing for the future publishing year and years. May we with the prophet Samuel of old raise a stone of remembrance—Ebenezer—"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (I Sam. 7:12b).

Your Board has met regularly, once a month, for the past year. The work of the Board is carried out in monthly meetings and in three standing committees, meeting each month, where the bulk of the board's work is done. These committees are: Marketing & Membership; Book & *SB* Publishing; and Finance & Operations. All these committees and a special committee, looking into long-range plans, have been busy this past year. A few highlights follow.

Our board Marketing Committee has studied our inventory and sales records, and as a result

we held a number of special promotions (reduced prices and monthly specials) at the website to increase book sales. A special mailing was conducted, sending the October 15, 2007 special issue of the *SB* to 122 URC ministers. This resulted in a few following subscriptions, plus getting our message out.

Through a special fund from a generous supporter, RFPA materials have been sent to people who are not able to afford our publications. This distribution is handled through PRC Evangelism Committees and the PRCA Mission Committee. A larger promotion, also through a generous gift, was the free distribution of the book *The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers* by Prof. David Engelsma. This free offer was advertised in several religious periodicals, including *World* magazine. One hundred of these books were given away at the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology held at the 1st Byron Center CRC in April. The RFPA had a table at this conference. A total of 455 books were distributed during this promotion.

The Board also arranged for our staff to attend the International Retail Book Sellers Show in Orlando, Florida, held in July. Not many books are sold directly at the show, but many contacts are made with domestic and

foreign booksellers. Attendance at such trade shows has proved to help spread the word of the quality and value of our publications.

Our *SB* subscription numbers have been down slightly over the past year, about 2.5% and nearly 9% over the last three years. This drop in circulation is probably due to the same causes as those experienced by many magazines. Alternate media forms, such as the Internet, have reduced print media circulations. The Board is working on promotions to halt the drop in circulation. We have acquired access to the database of all PR families and are in the process of the coordination of it with our subscription database so that we can contact and promote readership in PR families not currently subscribing to the *SB*.

The book publishing arm and book committee have not produced as many books this year as we have in the past years even though our book club membership has grown to a record level of 1,177 members. Several factors are involved in this temporary drop in publishing. Plans are to return to our usual publication rate in the coming year. A major bottleneck has been the loss of editorial personnel. Natalie Jefferson, as book editor, suffered a fall and complex leg fracture, which kept her bedridden for a number of months. She is recov-

ering, but has decided to cut back substantially on her workload. Other part-time editorial workers have had changes in their life situations that made it difficult to keep up their pace of editorial work. The publishing committee is seeking replacement workers and hopes to see in the coming year the production of about four new titles. One project being advanced is the publication of a book to commemorate the 500th year of John Calvin's birth. This book is a study of his great work, the *Institutes*. Prof. Engelsma is currently working on the completion of this study. This publication will be distributed in conjunction with a special commemoration of this milestone, currently being organized by the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Our Finance and Operations Committee keeps busy in the promotion of the financial support of the RFPA through gifts and church collections. You will note from the financial reports that the support of the RFPA, both in the *Standard Bearer* and Book divisions, has kept our monetary situation in excellent condition. We give thanks for this needed support for our work.

One operational highlight of the past year is the completion of the final stage of our building program. With the upgrade and installation of our office furnishings we have our building project completed. This project has been completed with no debt. The upgrade of our office equipment and furnishings were made possible by the generous gifts of

some donors. You are encouraged to visit our new facilities in Jenison, MI when in the area. The Board certainly appreciates the new building for its work and its meetings.

The Operations Committee has also been busy keeping our Internet site current and improving its function. We continued to add to the electronic, searchable archives of the *Standard Bearer*. We are now back to publication year 1961 and continue to add back issues on a regular basis. This feature of the website is a great help to those doing research and to anyone interested in checking back issues of the *SB*. Check out the website yourself at www.rfpa.org to learn more.

The Board continues to receive encouraging words, news, and comments about our publishing work through the mail and by e-mail. Some examples are:

● A review of "The Sad Case of Bert Zandstra" (originally published in the *SB*) showed up in the *Light of the World* magazine of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

● (re *The Covenant of God* giveaway) "Thank you so much for offering the book. I thoroughly enjoyed its contents and appreciate the keen insights the author presents."

● (from a *SB* reader in the Netherlands) "Mr. Kalsbeek has written a fine article. I would like to send this to the school my children go to and some teachers I am in contact with."

● (from a reader in Florida) "I thank you all for the sound lit-

erature that is being published by the RFPA. It's like I have stumbled upon a great treasure. You people in the PRC have been a great blessing to me and I thank God for you all."

● (re *The Covenant of God* giveaway) "Thank you for your effort in getting the truth of the reformation out into the church today" (Washington).

● "We are thankful for your part in making available the printed truth of God's word. Our prayer is that the RFPA never lose sight of the valuable gift of God's Word and the truths that are contained therein."

● "I am a subscriber to your *Standard Bearer* magazine and find it to be my favorite Christian magazine. I have not resubscribed to most of my Christian magazines because I believe that they have gone astray. I have read a review of *Redeemed with Judgment* and purchased it and find it to be heartwarming."

● (re *Redeemed with Judgment*) "Excellent book...could not put it down. Looking forward to the second volume. May God continue to richly bless you" (New York).

As the Board reports on the publication year just completed and looks forward to another year of publication of both the *SB* magazine and new or reprinted books, we covet your prayers and continued financial support so that in another year we can say, Ebenezer—Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Mission Activities

For the past several months our denomination's Domestic Mission Committee has been corresponding with a group of four families in Tucson, AZ who are interested in our churches' start-

ing a work in their city. These families, through personal study, have become very familiar with the PRC and are also giving a good witness in their community on a personal level and through the Internet (www.tucsonprotes-

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tantreformed.org). The DMC sent a delegation of Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, Missionary Rev. Allen Brummel, and Elder Dave Rau to visit with these families and to investigate this field of labor (September 11-15).

Over that weekend, the delegation spent hours, both formally and informally, answering questions about our churches' position on a wide range of topics. A family living some 90 miles south of Tucson, in Sierra Vista, that has been in contact with our churches for about ten years, also joined the group for worship services Sunday. The delegation advised the heads of these households to organize a steering committee and formally request our churches to start Sunday pulpit supply.

These families met the night of the 15th and organized themselves under the name of the Tucson Protestant Reformed Fellowship and officially requested pulpit supply. Since that time, the DMC has met and approved their request, deciding to try to arrange for supply for the next four to five months. So, readers of the *Standard Bearer*, if you have family or friends in Tucson, or perhaps are planning to travel there this winter yourselves, our churches will officially be holding worship services there. The Fellowship is still looking for a place to worship, so unfortunately we can't include that yet, but you can contact Mr. Jeff Wambolt at (520) 877-9152 if you desire more information. Let us pray for this group and for an open door to labor with them.

The Domestic Mission Committee sponsored a Mission Conference at the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI on September 8 and 9. On Monday evening Rev. Arie den Hartog opened the conference bringing a message to encourage believers in their interest and zeal for the work of missions. Prof. Barrett Gritters followed with a "Critique and Evaluation

of the History of PRC Mission Work." On Tuesday evening, Missionary Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma presented "What We Can Learn from the History of Reformed Missions." He was followed by Rev. Jason Kortering speaking on, "The Need for Special Training for the Work of Missions." Clearly this whole conference focused on the work of our own denomination and directed our attention to critiquing, evaluating, and encouraging all of us in the work of missions.

Congregation Activities

By mid-October, catechism classes in all our churches are in full swing, with most congregations starting back in early to mid-September. The first assignments for the students at the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI was a little different however. Grades 1-7 were to learn Lesson 1, while Grades 8-12 attended the Mission Conference at Southwest PRC, mentioned above, for their first class.

Senior and Junior Adults' Society members of Peace PRC in Lansing, IL were invited to a pre-season combined society cookout on September 13, at the home of Rev. Clay and Mrs. Allison Spronk. Besides food, the society members were reminded to bring a lawn chair and a Psalter.

The Randolph, WI PRC has begun a building project for a new sanctuary joined to their existing church building. Their current building is 40' x 75', the addition is 60' x 70'. If you have access to the Internet, check out the pictures of the construction at Randolph's web site www.randolphprc.org, or you can link it through our denomination's web site at www.prca.org.

If you go to our denomination's web site listed above, we also invite you to view the 10-minute introduction to the PRC posted there, which was recently produced by our churches'

DMC. Some of the churches have purchased a quantity of these DVDs and have encouraged their members to take some in order to pass them around to friends, family, and neighbors.

The annual Men's and Boys' campout for First PRC in Holland, MI was planned for September 19-20 at PJ Hoffmaster State Park, located north of Holland on the shore of Lake Michigan.

The 50th anniversary celebration of the Loveland, CO PRC was held September 19. The evening began with supper at 6:00 P.M. The anniversary program and speech followed. Prof. David Engelsma, who served as their second pastor from 1963-1974, gave a speech entitled, "Remember.... that God Remembered," using the text Psalm 105:8.

Sister-Church Activities

Additions to the web site of Covenant PRC in Ballymena, Northern Ireland (www.cprc.co.uk) continue. Two translations in Portuguese and one in Afrikaans were recently added, plus the Apostles' Creed in various other languages. Thirteen of these were languages not before on the CPRC's web site, so Covenant now has material in 110 languages on-line.

The BRF Conference speeches on "The Work of the Holy Spirit" have been added to the BRF web site and are available for free downloading: www.britishreformedfellowship.org.uk/audio.htm

Minister Activities

Rev. Hanco declined the call he received to become the first pastor of Calvary PRC in Hull, IA. Rev. R. Kleyn declined the call extended to him by the Doon, IA PRC to serve as missionary pastor to the Berean PRC in Manila, the Philippines. And Rev. R. VanOverloop accepted the call to serve as pastor of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI. 

Announcements

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We rejoice with our parents, **DAVE and LINDA POORTINGA**, as they celebrate 40 years of marriage on November 8, 2008. We are thankful to God our Father for His constant faithfulness to our parents over the years.

We also wish to express our thankfulness to our parents for leading us by example and admonishing us in love, and for their unconditional love. May God give us strength as we strive from day to day to be godly parents as they have been to us. May the Lord continue to bless and preserve them in the years ahead. "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him" (Proverbs 20:7). With much love from their children,

- ❖ Rod and Kim Griess
Dana, Noah, Taylor
- ❖ Craig and Tiffany Poortinga
Alexis, Jaden, Carlyn, Morgan
(2 in glory)
- ❖ Sam and Debbie Carson
Natalie (in glory), Ethan, Caleb
- ❖ Jordan and Chandra Kamps
Denae, Dawson, Jori
Loveland, Colorado

TEACHERS NEEDED

The Protestant Reformed School in Wingham, of Wingham, Ontario, Canada, is planning, the Lord willing, to start a Protestant Reformed school beginning in September 2009. We are planning to include grades K through 12 and are looking for 2 teachers. We are seeking applicants to fill an administrative role and teach upper grades. Also we are seeking applicants to fill the elementary grade position. Those applying should be members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Interested applicants should contact board Vice-President Mr. Harvey Kikkert at (519) 523-4823 or email hkikkert@hurontel.on.ca

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We rejoice with our parents, **DAVID and BONNIE MOELKER**, as they celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary on November 8, 2008. Our Father is a faithful God in covenant blessing from generation to generation. We thank them for the many acts of love, devotion, and sacrifices they have made throughout the years. It is our prayer, through God's grace, that they may continue to be a godly example to us. May God continue to bless and preserve them with many years of marriage together.

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

- ❖ Kristina Moelker
- ❖ Keven Moelker
- ❖ Jayson and Kari Alsum
Jacob, Reece, Brianna
- ❖ Dan and Kolleen Barnhill
Taylor
- ❖ Clint and Katie Karsemeyer
Walker, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The congregation of Hull PRC express Christian sympathy to Rev. and Nancy Key in the recent passing into glory of Nancy's father,

MR. PETER BOSCH.

It is our prayer that you may find comfort from our Lord in the words of Psalm 27:14: "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

Pete Brummel, Vice President
Gerald Brummel, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and the congregation of Edgerton PRC wish to express Christian sympathy to the Post family following the passing of their mother,

MRS. IRENE LAVONNE POST.

May they find comfort in God's Word, II Corinthians 1:3, 4: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Rev. Dennis Lee, President
James VerHey, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The congregation and council of Hull PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Florence Brunsting and Mr. and Mrs. Don VerMeer in the recent passing into glory of their husband and father,

MR. RAY BRUNSTING.

It is our prayer that they find comfort in the words of Psalm 147:3-5: "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their name. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite."

Pastor Steven Key, President
Gerald Brummel, Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

November 2008

Date	Topic	Text
November 2	"The Surpassing Excellence of My Lord"	Phil. 3:8-12
November 9	"Talitha Cumi"	Mark 5:21-43
November 16	"With Jesus in His Glory"	John 17:24
November 23	"Grace for Today"	Matthew 6:34
November 30	"Those Born of God Love One Another"	I John 4:7, 8